

COMMENTS

The Office Action divides the claims into three groups. The Office Action asserts that each group is drawn to a patentably distinct method because they have different modes of operation and different steps. The Office Action goes on to state that the methods have a different number of interfaces, and thus a reference teaching the method of any of the three groups will not teach the methods of either of the other two groups. Applicant respectfully traverses.


The methods of group I, II, and III differ only at steps (c) and (e), both of which recite the display of one or more graphical user interfaces (GUIs) to a user. Group I utilizes one GUI in steps (c) and (e), group II utilizes two GUIs, and Group III utilizes three GUIs. In Groups II and III, the second GUI displays a phylogenetic tree representation of the selected master sequence alignment domain and its homologous alignment domains. In Group III, the third GUI displays a table consisting of data fields for the source and name of each corresponding sequence from the multiple sequence alignment. Applicant asserts that a search and examination of all three claim groups can be made without serious burden. If a search is carried out to identify references that teach the method of Group I, for example, it will identify references that contain a step in which a GUI is displayed that meets the requirements of sections (c)(i)-(c)(iv) of claim 1. Such a search will necessarily identify all of the references that teach the methods of Groups II and III, because the methods of these Groups also require the display of a first GUI meeting the requirements of sections (c)(i)-(c)(iv). The only difference is that they also recite the display of either one or two additional GUIs, with a phylogenetic tree

representation and a table of data fields, respectively. Once references are identified that teach the method of Group I, it would not be a serious burden to determine which of these also teach the methods of Groups II or III. It would merely require determining whether the references teach the display of one or two additional GUIs. M.P.E.P. 803 states that where search and examination of the entire application can be carried out without a serious burden, the Examiner must examine the application on the merits even if it includes claims to independent or distinct inventions.

Nevertheless, Applicant has provisionally elected Group III, which is drawn to claims 7-10, 15-16, and 19. In addition, applicant has amended claim 10 to clarify that it is dependent on claim 7.

Respectfully submitted,
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